



SOLAR DECATHLON

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Solar Homes on the Move to Nation's Capitol For Some Solar Decathlon Teams, Biggest Challenge is Getting to National Mall

Washington, D.C. - To ship a home across the Atlantic, one needs five containers, six weeks and several thousand dollars. A team from the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (UPM) learned this first hand as they sent a home they've worked on for two years across the ocean to soak up the sun in Washington, D.C. as an entry in the 2005 Solar Decathlon, taking place Oct. 7-16 on the National Mall.

"Shipping the house is not an easy task," said Estefanía Caamaño, a professor at UPM and the Solar Decathlon team's faculty advisor. "There are five containers arriving by sea transport and one by air freight."

Many teams, including the Universidad de Puerto Rico, Concordia University in Montreal and even California Polytechnic State University had to plan months in advance to ensure their homes arrive in Washington, D.C. in time for the competition.

The 2005 Solar Decathlon involves 18 collegiate teams from across the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico and Spain. During the past two years, each team raised funds, conceptualized, designed and then built a completely zero-energy, solar-powered home.

Now it's time to transport the houses, and when the big trucks start rolling into Washington, D.C. Sept. 29, the teams will reassemble their homes, turning the National Mall into a solar village.

Teams will work on setting up their houses until the opening ceremony on Oct. 6. The competition opens to the public on Oct. 7 and will continue until Oct. 16. The Solar Decathlon winner will be the team that best blends aesthetics and modern conveniences with maximum energy production and optimal efficiency.

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For defending champions the University of Colorado, which won the inaugural competition in 2002, it was just as important to use alternative energy to transport their house. As part of their “low-to-no-petroleum” pledge, the Colorado team will transport their home using only 100 percent biodiesel, a fuel made from vegetable oil.

“These are things the CU team wants to do above and beyond the competition requirements,” said Jeff Lyng, the student project manager for Colorado. “We want to put our money where our mouth is.”

The team also mapped out an indirect route to D.C. that adds almost 1,000 miles to their journey to avoid bridges lower than 15 feet, eight inches, because the house is too tall to fit under bridges lower than that height. The planned route will take them through Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee and Virginia and includes both highways and two-lane county roads.

The challenge for all the teams is to demonstrate their houses, unique in architecture and strong in functionality, can provide power for everything a standard home would require.

The prototype houses, limited to 500-800 square feet for purposes of the competition, showcase the latest in energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. Students will compete in 10 areas ranging from architecture, livability and comfort to how well the homes provide energy for space heating and cooling, hot water, lighting, and appliances. Each house also must produce enough “extra” power for an electric car.

For more information, visit www.solardecathlon.org to see images of the houses and learn more about the event.

The 2005 Solar Decathlon is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in partnership with its National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the American Institute of Architects, the National Association of Homebuilders, BP, the DIY Network, and Sprint Nextel.

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